

Comments to the USDA Hearing on "Naturally Raised" label 1/17/07

Thank you for sponsoring this hearing. My name is Mary Blair McMorran. I am a member the Weston A. Price Foundation; a group of consumers whose mission is to educate people about nutrient-dense foods.

(I understand you are attempting to establish industry standards for "Organic", "grassfed", "Natural", and today, "Naturally Raised")

I hope this effort will start an open dialogue that will educate Americans about their food sources. Our motto is "Know Your Source".

Over the last 50 years large producers used science and technology to increase yields, profit margins, and food shelf-life. At the same time, government guidelines increasingly favored corporate interests, at the expense of small farmers and ranchers. Somewhere along the way, we lost sight of animal health and their connection to human nutrition. The devastating health effects of those decisions are widespread.

Confined Animal Feeding Operations must radically change, under any label. Instead of grass, they feed GMO corn and soy. Corn creates an acid environment, where e.coli thrives. Soy is known to cause mastitis in dairy animals, and mineral deficiencies that result in stillborn calves, or calves that cannot stand up after birth, as well as lesions in their liver. Soy-fed cattle live less than half as long as grassfed cattle. Phytoestrogens abundant in soy cause fertility problems. Feeding corn and soy to animals is not biologically appropriate feed; it disrupts natural growth patterns, and promotes deadly bacteria. We are what we eat.

Grassfed cattle, on the other hand, although longer to market, grow at a normal pace, have strong healthy babies that can survive a winter storm, and need no hormones or antibiotics to sustain them. E.Coli and other bacteria are dramatically reduced, often non-existent. Their meat has heart-healthy CLA (Conjugated Linolenic Acid), an abundance of trace minerals, much higher omega-3 content, and much lower amounts of saturated fat. 60 days in feedlot reduces CLA by 50%

Today, science reveals clear and undeniable evidence that feeding animals biologically appropriate food, allowing them free access to pasture, and sound animal husbandry produces healthy robust animals. This same energy is transferred to humans when we eat this nutrient-dense food.

The American Grassfed Association has recently adopted standards for its members that defines grassfed as an animal that has received only plant materials (no grain) and mothers' milk, without confinement, as its food source over its entire life. We would like to see these standards be the norm for any livestock, regardless of the marketing label.

We urge you to adopt standards that address the health of both animals and humans. My perception as a consumer is that various USDA labeling standards will confuse the consumer and please the corporation, and naturally, prices will increase. None of the proposed labeling standards ensure that any livestock purchased in the retail market was raised in a healthy environment.

It takes a half gallon of gas to produce one pound of hamburger from CAFOs. Further, these crowded conditions contribute to greenhouse gases. Please endorse sustainable farming practices that help our environment, address our dependence on oil, global warming, and restore our depleted soils and polluted waters.

We urge you to cease trying to legislate bacteria; they outnumber us and will easily mutate their way around USDA policy. Instead, find a healthy balance – educate people about healthy bacteria. We beg you to encourage the growth of small farms, and strengthen local economies. Drop the NAIS program, which does nothing to address the cause of disease and will eventually annihilate small farms.

We are what we eat. Thomas Jefferson and Walt Whitman consumed milk and meat from grassfed animals, as did their fellow Americans. Their bodies and minds were strong, and their spirits were indomitable. The decisions you make will determine our health, and the future of America.

Thank you for your time.

Sources: www.westonaprice.org
www.eatwild.com
www.ucsusa.org (union of concerned scientists)
"The Whole Soy Story - The Dark Side of America's Favorite Health Food" by Dr. Kaayla Daniels